

City of Alexandria, Virginia

Site See 2022 Waterfront Park

Diane Ruggiero

Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities Dept.
Office of the Arts



GROUNDSWELL



The Washington Post

5/21/2021

On Exhibit



PHOTO BY LORAN HOFFER FOR CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

'Groundswell': Deep dive on the shores

Alluring art installation mirrors the Potomac's underwater topography

BY MARK JENKINS

Alexandria's Waterfront Park appears to be a peaceful spot, but it's actually a battleground. And while most of the conflicts waged there are safety in the past, one is looming. This imminent struggle between the Potomac River and its banks is one of the implied subjects of "Groundswell," a sculptural installation by Mark Belgelman.

The Brooklyn artist's work is the latest in Alexandria's public art series, "Size See: New Views in Old Town." The piece's most conspicuous elements are 101 round wooden pillars, each 14 inches in diameter but of varying heights. The columns range from 12 to 42 inches high to represent the



depth of the adjacent Potomac, and are spaced in rows on a painted ground mural that maps the river's underwater topography. Along each post is a reflective blue disc etched with concentric black ripples. These suggest a tree's growth rings, and thus the passage of time, but also water in motion.

The pillars are meant to evoke the wooden pilings that were driven as part of the process of filling — or "reclaiming" — parts of the river for development. In Alexandria's early years, waterfront land owners retained ownership of any area they transformed from liquid to solid. So they had ample motivation to dump dirt, rocks and detritus into the Potomac, and even scuttie ships to serve as the foundation for new ground.

When the city was founded in 1746, its riverfront was positioned securely on bluffs that rose 15 to 20 feet high. These were gradually

If you go

GROUNDWELL

Waterfront Park, 1 Prince St., Alexandria, alexandria.com

Dates: Open 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily through November. Exact closing date to be determined, but deinstallation is expected to begin Nov. 7.

Admission: Free.

Brooklyn sculptor

Mark Belgelman's

"Groundswell"

Installation in Old

Town Alexandria

features 101

wooden pillars

that have

reflective blue

discs that evoke

the rings of a tree

but also the

ripples of water.

SEE GROUNDWELL, PAGE 12



GROUNDWELL, FROM 12

ly demolished, adding land but making the harbor more vulnerable to high water. (In fact, Waterfront Park is an interim project that will close temporarily in a few years as a flood-mitigation strategy can proceed.)

A corollary to the ongoing conflict between land and water is a series of tangles over ownership of the filled-in property. In the 17th century, the colony of Maryland was given ownership of the entire Potomac, all the way to the high-water mark on the Virginia shore. When the District of Columbia was created, it acquired the breadth of the Potomac within its borders. Thus new land on the Virginia side — created by natural forces as well as human efforts — was technically not in the commonwealth.

Numerous trans-Potomac legal skirmishes ensued, continuing into the 1970s. A more recent case, pitting Alexandria against the Old Dominion Boat Club, directly affected the creation of the current Waterfront Park. (The city lost but then managed to buy

the land it wanted.)

These days, the status of Alexandria's waterfront is connected not by local litigants but by global forces rising sea levels, more-intense storms and a climate char-

acterized by drier dries and wetter wets. There is now abundant reason to doubt the human mastery over nature assumed by the people who once manipulated the Potomac's shores.

If "Groundswell" summons thoughts of ecological jeopardy, it also has a playful side. As a sculptor and designer, Belgelman frequently works in parks, redefining space and highlighting local

The "Groundswell" installation by Mark Belgelman, below, is an open space, but the pillars give the illusion of crowded spaces for visitors who roam through it. And the reflective blue discs add another element of crowd appeal.



PHOTO BY LORAN HOFFER FOR CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

history. His work is in the tradition of architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, whose design for D.C.'s Freedom Plaza placed a map of L'Enfant Plan amid streets drawn by that scheme. It's a place that illustrates itself.

History aside, "Groundswell" simply outlines architectural space in a way people find appealing. The area is still open, yet it's divided into a succession of little rooms without walls, each chamber set off by the pillars. Visitors walk (or run) through the installation, finding themselves in a slightly new setting with just a few steps. Varying the heights of the posts has a similar effect. People sit (or stand) on them, enjoying the different — again, just slightly — vantage points. The mirrorlike discs atop each column add another element of crowd appeal. They reflect the sky but also faces, hands and bodies. People can gaze at (or photograph) themselves within the simulated water. Their presence may not historicize, but it, too, defines the space.

gndswell@alexandria.gov

THE WASHINGTON POST, FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2021

SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL EVENT
9/11/2021



R & R Studio

Miami, FL

R & R Studios, the collaborative office of Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt is a multidisciplinary practice weaving together visual arts, architecture, design and the city. Celebrated, as one critic put it “as architects of hope” their works propose encounters of stories and spaces, which alternate between the personal and the public, the quotidian and the extraordinary, the poetical and the political. R & R Studios works erase boundaries between art and life and suggest “imaginary solutions” for a better world.





THE LIVING ROOM, Design District
Miami, Florida, USA



BESAME MUCHO, Coachella Valley Music and Arts
Festival 2016, Indio, California, USA



SUPERNOVA, Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, Indio, California, USA

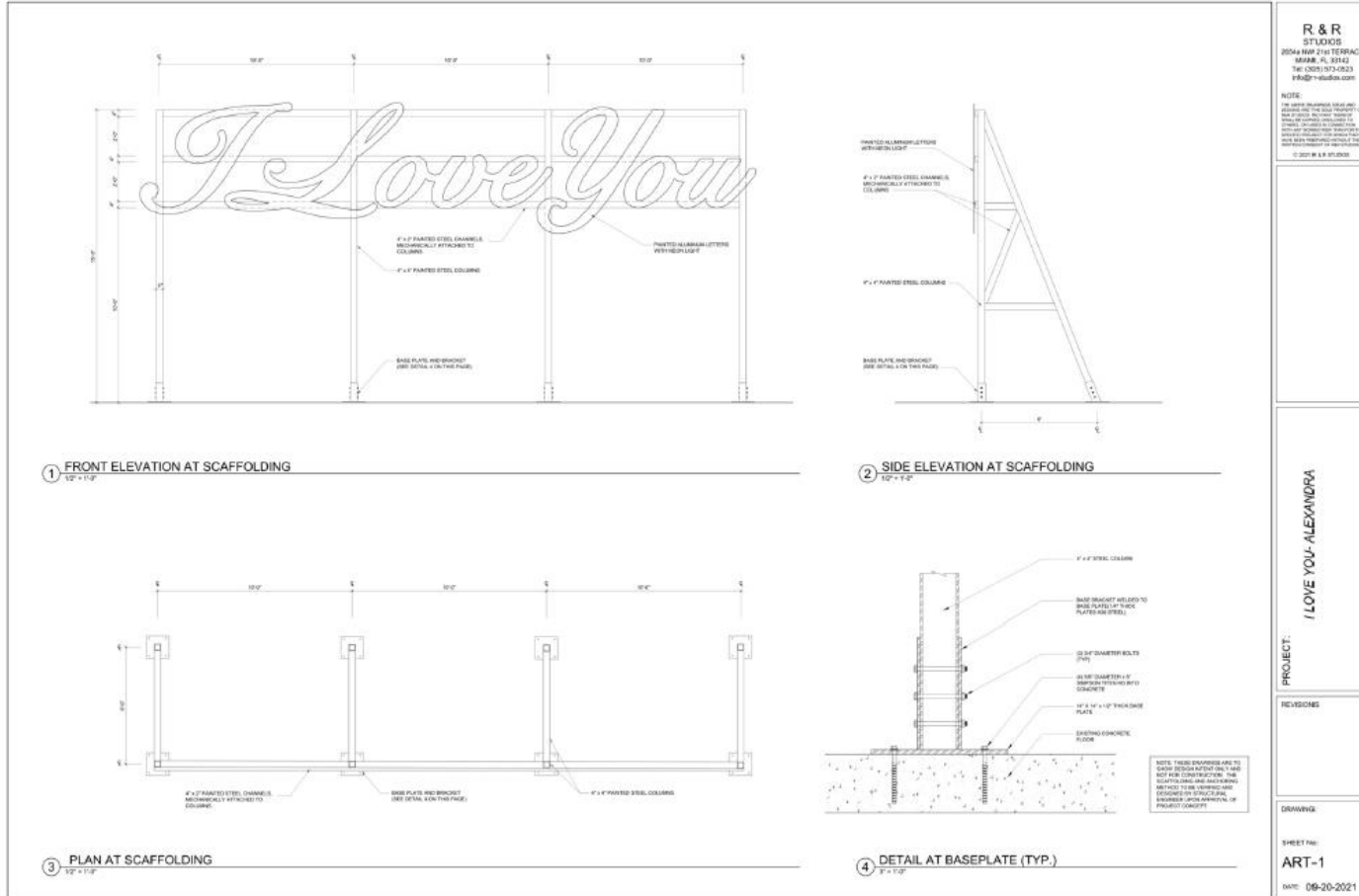
“I LOVE YOU” Site See 2022

I LOVE YOU CREATES A DREAMSCAPE WHERE MEMORY AND DESIRE COME TOGETHER AND
THE FANTASTIC AND EVERYDAY LIFE BECOME ONE.



I LOVE YOU BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER WITH A MESSAGE AT ONCE UNIVERSAL AND UTTERLY PERSONAL





Site See: New Views in Old Town
March 19, 2022 – November 6, 2022



City of Alexandria, Virginia

Thank You!

Questions?

